



The city with a heart

October 22, 2004

Ja-Deen Johnson
Director, Consumer Affairs Division
Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission
302 W. Washington St., E306
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Tony Dzwonar
Director, External Affairs
Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor
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David L. Miller
Mayor

Mayor's Office

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Dear Ms. Johnson and Mr. Dzwonar,

In our experience, low-income households in northern Indiana simply cannot come up with the funds to pay high NIPSCO deposits *and* remain current with their monthly heating bills. Searching for help, these families reach out to churches and social service agencies. Our community agencies are overwhelmed with requests for assistance which their own resources are inadequate to cover. In addition, funds used for utility deposits are then unavailable for other needs such as rent, prescriptions, and food. Therefore, the community is often times funding NIPSCO's utility deposit requirements. Not the customer.

These large deposits charged by NIPSCO in Northern Indiana are creating a burden for low-income families in the city of Elkhart. My staff frequently fields calls from families in our area who are unable to establish gas service because the deposit requirements are impossible to meet on their meager incomes.

You are considering changes to the administrative rules covering customer service rights and responsibilities (IURC Cause No. RM 04-02). I encourage you to approve the cap on utilities at two months (one-sixth) of the customer's estimated annual bill. If possible, I would like to see that cap reduced to no more than one month (one-twelfth) of the estimated annual bill.

I affirm your willingness to consider lowering the amount of these utility deposits and encourage you to cap the deposit amount at one-twelfth of the estimated annual bill. On behalf of Elkhart NIPSCO customers, thank you.

Sincerely,

Dave Miller, Mayor
City of Elkhart